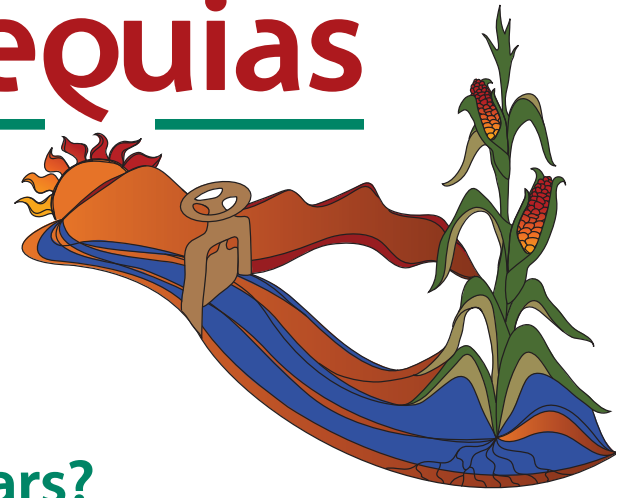


Noticias de las Acequias

New Mexico *Acequia* Association • Spring 2018



What can I do to protect my water rights in drought years?

New Mexico is a “use it or lose it” state when it comes to water rights.

by Enrique Romero, NMAA Staff Attorney

New Mexico law, including our Constitution, our statutes and State Engineer regulations, all point to beneficial use of water as the limit of one’s water rights. Specifically, Article XVI, Section 3 of our state Constitution provides: “Beneficial use shall be the basis, the measure and the limit of the right to the use of water.” If, in times of drought, there is no water, or little water, to use, how does the legal requirement of beneficial use impact our water rights?

Conditions beyond the owner’s control. At first glance, the forfeiture statute appears rather harsh on this issue of beneficial use during times of drought. If a water right owner “fails to beneficially use all or any part of the water claimed by him...for a period of four years, such unused water shall, if the failure to beneficially use the water persists one year after notice revert to the public and shall be regarded as unappropriated public water.” However, the statute provides on out: “forfeiture shall not necessarily occur if circumstances beyond the control of the owner have caused nonuse, such that the water could not be placed to beneficial use by diligent efforts of the owner.” Therefore, a shortage of water due to drought is beyond the owner’s control, and our Supreme Court has so held on to at least one occasion. In *Chavez v. Gutierrez*, the court held that there was no case for abandonment where several factors rendered “irrigation impractical or impossible”, including droughts producing a shortage of water, the progressively increasing depth and width of a canyon running through the parcel at issue, and the owners actively irrigated when water was available.

Water banking. If there is some water flowing through the acequia during a drought, acequia parciantes can take advantage of water banking to protect their water rights while still encouraging others to actively irrigate. The water banking

statute protects acequia water rights from claims of non-use while those water rights are in the bank. One of the purposes of the bank is specifically called out: “to augment the water supplies available for the places of use served by the acequia.” Water supplies are short, of course, during times of drought, and this statute allows one person’s water rights to be used on other irrigated parcels on the acequia without penalty to the water right owner. You can also look at the water bank as a form of water sharing between parciantes. One parciante forgoes irrigating so other parciantes have more water to irrigate their parcels. State law, via the water banking statute, codifies this customary practice and specifically protects water rights placed in the water bank. The theory, consistent with our Constitution’s mandate on beneficial use, is that the water rights in the water bank that are appurtenant to one particular place of use are being beneficially used elsewhere on the ditch.

Pay your dues and maintain your headgates. Just because there is no water, or less water, in the acequia does not mean that you should stop participating on the acequia. Your assessments are more than just a fee for water. They are integral to operating a local, public body and go to paying all expenses of the acequia, including potentially improving infrastructure to make the best use of what little water may be available to the members. Participation on the acequia has individual benefits as well. Remember that if there is ever a disagreement about whether it is “impractical or impossible” to irrigate due to drought, your actions as a water right owner will be called into question. Proving an intent to abandon water rights becomes easier as the years of continuous non-use increase. The State Engineer or others who are calling into question the validity of your water rights will look to other evidence besides actual irrigation. Did the parciante remain in good standing with the acequia during the period of non-use? Did the parciante maintain their “on-farm” infrastructure like headgates and laterals? Did the parciante keep invasive species under control

continued on page 2



Apple Blossoms on Acequia de Gavilan. Photo by Tim Vieneck.

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Sandia Mountains visible in the background, from the Las Conchas burn scar, six years after the fire burned through here. Photo by Laura Paskus.

Record Low Snowpack Foretells Troubling Spring, Summer

by Laura Paskus , February 11, 2018

Excerpt reprinted with permission from NM Political Report

On the last day of January, Kerry Jones points to signs near the Crest Trail in the Sandia Mountains. Nailed to a conifer, the signs guide cross-country skiers along the trail and they're placed high enough to be visible in the winter snows. Today, the signs are a good three feet above his outstretched arm. Beneath his boots, there are only a couple of inches of snow.

It's not supposed to be this way.


And a few hundred yards away at Sandia Peak, the view is even more grim.

Thousands of feet below, the Rio Grande Valley is dusty and dry. To the west, Mount Taylor should be a hulking white mass this time of year. Instead it's just a deeper shade of blue than the sky. Along Sandia Crest, what snow there might have been has blown back from the edge.

"We're up at just a little bit above 10,000 feet and in the world of weather this is high altitude," says Jones, a warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Albuquerque. "This time of year we should be not on bare ground as we are today, but [standing in] several feet of snow."

The lack of snow in New Mexico's mountains will have implications for farmers and cities in the spring and summer. And certain tree populations in many of the state's mountain ranges, including the Sandias and Jemez Mountains, are already experiencing large-scale dieoffs. Drought and warming temperatures have weakened ponderosa pines and some conifers, which make them even more vulnerable to insect outbreaks. And communities should be preparing for wildfire season.


NMAA encourages readers to review the entire article:

<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/804529/record-low-snowpack-foretells-troubling-spring-summer-en/> 

What can I do to protect my water rights in drought years? *.continued from page 1*

during the period of non-use in order to beneficially apply water when, or if, it becomes available? Hopefully, during this extremely dry year, you will answer yes to these questions whether you irrigate or not.

Conserving water does not diminish your water rights. At least that is what is suggested in 72-5-18 (B), NMSA 1978. I think it is worthwhile to provide the exact statutory language: "Improved irrigation methods or changes in agriculture practices resulting in conservation of water shall not diminish beneficial use or otherwise affect an owner's water rights or quantity of appurtenant acreage." Some folks have expressed some concern that if they use less water, whether during times of drought or otherwise, they will be penalized by the State Engineer by having their quantity of water or their irrigable acreage reduced. This statute appears to protect existing, vested water rights and however they have been exercised prior to the conservation practice taking place.

It's disconcerting to see little or no water flowing through the acequia during times of drought. But don't lose hope. Instead, show the world that it's business as usual during this unusually dry period. Pay your dues, go to meetings, keep your headgates maintained, and prepare your land for water when it eventually comes. It will. 

IDEAS FOR GROWING, SAVING & SHARING LOCAL SEEDS THIS YEAR



Top: "These hands, earth and seeds will bring life!" Right: "Seed saving! The strength to adapt, grow, and sustain!" Photos by Emily Arasim.

by Emily Arasim, NMAA Farm Apprentice

The practice of saving and passing down seeds from hand to hand, amongst families and neighbors, has been maintained for countless generations amongst New Mexico's Indigenous and traditional acequia farming communities.

Over time, economic, social, and other changes at the state and global levels have pressured farmers to stop saving their own seeds; and have, in many places, resulted in fewer exchanges of diversity, knowledge, stories, and skills between elder and younger generations.

However, here in New Mexico, roots run deep, and many have quietly held tight to treasured varieties and know-how.

As we look towards a year of stress on our watersheds and acequia systems, it could not be clearer why we need to continue to protect, save, and share local, traditional seeds. Traditional seeds— such as our many place-based types of maíz, *habas*, beans, sunflowers, and chiles—**remember**, and grow stronger and more resilient with every year of good care, as they adapt to specific local soils, waters and unpredictable weather conditions.

Saving our own seeds can also reduce yearly farm costs, and bring us the best health and happiness, as we select and save what tastes and works best for our families, businesses and diverse cultural uses.

In case you need a refresher as we prepare for planting - in case you don't have abuelos or neighbors to advise you - in case you have never tried your hand at saving seeds before - here are a few tips for the year.

- The best seeds are local seeds from fellow farmers and seed exchanges (such as Owingeh Ta in April!). If you need to buy from companies to get started - open pollinated and organic are important terms to look for, and you can also search for traditional NM varieties in several catalogues.

- To maintain the strength of a seed, it is important to grow out at least a small group of the same variety (not just one plant!), and at the end of the year, mix together the seeds from as many individuals as possible. This ensures good diversity for re-planting next year.

- If you are growing multiple varieties of the same crop (such as two different types of squash), and you don't want them to cross-pollinate - try keeping space between varieties, planting varieties so they flower at different times, and/or planting hedgerows, such as sunflowers, in between varieties.

- Seeds like to mature on the plant and/or in their pods or fruits for as long as possible, before being harvested and laid to dry in an area with shade and good air-flow. Traditional corn braids

and chile ristras are both beautiful and functional ways to dry and save seeds long-term.

- After drying, it is important to clean out excess soil and leaf matter, which can cause mold when seeds are stored. Using screens or kitchen strainers will do the trick, or try the wind or a small fan to blow away debris.

- Glass jars are ideal storage containers for keeping moisture and pests out! Cloth sacks, paper bags, envelopes, baskets, clay vessels and metal cans also work - just try to avoid plastic.

- Seeds are happy stored in a cool, dry place - and can last for many years (or even decades or hundreds of years) under optimal conditions. Lucky for New Mexicans, most adobe homes are naturally perfect!

- Remember to label your seeds with as much information as possible - What is it called? What year was it last grown and where? What were the growing conditions, and what was learned about this variety? Who gave you the original seed? What is the origin story or history of the seed? What is its history within your family or community? What are favorite ways to enjoy eating or making medicine with it?

- If you have old seeds and are not sure if they're still good for planting - a germination test can help check before spending time and energy in the field. Simply fold a paper towel in half a few times; lay out a row of seeds on the towel and fold them in; label the outside (seed name, date, total number of seeds); thoroughly wet with a spray bottle; put in a plastic baggie; seal it closed; and place in a warm place. After a week or so, carefully open up the towel and check out your (hopefully!) sprouted seeds. You can count the number of sprouts, and divide this by the total number of seeds to find your germination rate (15 sprouted / 20 seeds = 75% germination).

- At the end of the season, share your seeds and stories! If you can, pass these precious gifts on to the next generation of young farmers.

The deepest thanks go to the mentors who have shared seeds, teachings, and encouragement with me; to every farmer and family across the state saving their heritage; and to the New Mexico Food and Seed Sovereignty Alliance (of which NMAA is a part), which works to protect our right to continue these vital practices.

I hope these tips will encourage you to reclaim your relationship with the seeds which sustain us. 💧

Seeds Preemption Bill Tabled in 2018 Legislative Session

by NM Food and Seed Sovereignty Alliance

During the 2018 session, a bill with the words “seeds” and “preemption” in the title caught the attention of farmers and seed-savers in New Mexico. The bill appeared to be the handiwork of the biotech industry, which was attempting to prevent local governments from enacting regulations on the cultivation of seeds. The opposition to the bill was swift and strong. Tribal officials and farmers, who advocate for protecting heirloom/landrace seeds from cross-contamination by genetically engineered seeds, mobilized against the bill, and it was tabled in its first hearing. This bill was revealing about the national agenda of the biotech industry to preempt local laws and about the extent of opposition from grassroots organizations comprised of gardeners, seedsavers, and farmers.



“Cortando Alfalfa en Taos” on Acequia del Marrano.
Photo by Jacinta Chavez.

One might ask why a pharmaceutical corporation such as Bayer would be pushing for this bill in New Mexico. It has been reported in recent months that Bayer and Monsanto are seeking a merger, and Monsanto is well known as the dominant transnational corporation that aggressively develops and markets genetically engineered seed. Beyond that, Monsanto has aggressively “protected” its seed patents by suing farmers who were inadvertently contaminated with Monsanto’s DNA. Farmers are rightfully concerned about having Monsanto, or Bayer-Monsanto, as a neighbor. In addition to the risk of contamination, genetically engineered seeds (also known as genetically modified organisms or GMOs) have been associated with the emergence of “superweeds” that evolve to resist the herbicides in GMO seeds.

So, why did these corporations want to pass a preemption bill in New Mexico? First, it is important to explain the term “preemption.” Preemption is a strategy used by industry to enact laws at the federal or state levels to preclude local governments from enacting regulations, specifically if those regulations are more stringent than state or federal laws. Several other states have enacted laws that preempt local governments from enacting ordinances

regulating seeds. In the US, 29 other states have enacted preemption laws that prevent local counties and cities from regulating the cultivation of seeds.

The likely reason that Bayer and Monsanto are pushing preemption is that the industry wants to prevent local governments from passing regulations that restrict, prohibit, or otherwise regulate the cultivation of genetically engineered seeds. There are several reasons for local governments to enact local regulations, including protecting existing farmers, especially those cultivating native, heirloom, or organic seeds, from cross contamination from GMO seeds. At this point in time, there have been no local governments in New Mexico that have enacted or proposed enactment of such ordinances, but it appears that industry wants to preempt their ability to do so before local governments have an opportunity to even consider any ordinances concerning seeds.

HB 161 proposed to amend the “New Mexico Seed Law” in Chapter 76, which was enacted in 1967. The Seed Law sets forth the laws for certifying seeds for commercial sale to ensure that, when consumers purchase seed, the seeds meet standards for purity and germination rates and also that the seeds are properly labeled. The Seed Law also defines the certification agency for implementing the Seed Law from the NM Department of Agriculture and the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service. The law currently does not appear to include explicit language that outlines jurisdiction that regulates the location of the cultivation and production of seeds.

Around the US, there are some states, such as California, where local governments have enacted ordinances that restrict the cultivation of GMO crops. In Hawaii, counties enacted ordinances banning GMOs and/or pesticides/herbicides but those were overturned in the federal courts. Whether local governments can adopt ordinances regulating or banning depends on the specific language in state laws, where there may be expressed preemption or where state law occupies the field. In cases where it is not specific whether state law completely occupies the field, there is concurrent jurisdiction, in which local governments have some ability to regulate, provided it does not conflict with state law. It appears that HB 161 was an attempt to change state law to completely preempt local governments presumably because local governments in New Mexico may have some jurisdiction to regulate GMOs.

The NM Food and Seed Sovereignty Alliance was founded in 2006 and is a collective of organizations and traditional farmers from Pueblo and acequia communities dedicated to protecting native seeds from contamination from cross pollination from genetically engineered seeds, or GMOs, genetically modified organisms. The Alliance includes Tewa Women United, Honor Our Pueblo Existence, the Traditional Native American Farmers Association, and the NM Acequia Association. 💧



Food & Seed Traditions: Amaranth Harvest Festival.
Photo by Brook McQuade.

Legislation Improves Access to Federal Funds for Acequias



l: "Pala Power." Parcientes of the Acequia San Jose de la Cienega cleaning their acequia. Photo by Marty Vigil. r: Gilbert Borrego, NRCS, on site at Acequia del Alto al Norte conducting an inspection of the new presa. Photo by Paula Garcia, Executive Director of NMAA.

by NMAA Staff

On February 15, 2018, Congressman Ben Ray Lujan introduced legislation to improve acequia eligibility for certain conservation programs funded through the Farm Bill. The bill, entitled the Acequia Conservation Program Eligibility Act, would streamline eligibility for acequias for conservation programs that can be used to make conservation improvements to acequias. The legislation, if passed, will expand the amount of federal resources available to acequias.

The Acequia Conservation Program Eligibility Act will enable acequia associations to access funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stew-

ardship Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Conservation Security Program. The reason this legislation is needed is that acequias currently are eligible for these conservation programs only as part of partnerships through the Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) or through the use of a Joint Venture between individual landowners.

In an announcement about the legislation, Congressman Lujan said, "By making it easier for acequias to access federal funding, we can improve the water use and conservation practices that are key to helping our agricultural communities growing." Luján's legislation was developed by working with the New Mexico Acequia Association and the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts.

"Acequias are the lifeblood of our communities as part of our cultural heritage and rural economy. They support the availability of locally grown food and the livelihood of farmers and ranchers in New Mexico," said Paula Garcia, Executive Director of the New Mexico Acequia Association. "We greatly appreciate the effort of Congressman Luján to improve eligibility of acequias to participate in USDA conservation programs. Water conservation practices can help keep acequias flowing more efficiently, particularly during times of drought, helping to keep a centuries-old irrigation tradition alive."

"We appreciate Congressman Luján's efforts to secure language in the next farm bill for the Acequias," said Debbie Hughes, Executive Director of the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts. "The New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts is happy to work with USDA and NRCS to provide financial and technical resources through the Farm Bill to New Mexico's acequias and are hopeful that this legislation will make that process easier moving forward." 💧

GOVERNANCE TIPS: Acequia Easements & Jurisdiction Over Laterals

by David Benavides, Attorney with NM Legal Aid

Q. If a conflict arises on a lateral of our acequia can we as the officers of the acequia stay out of any involvement? We have always had a policy of non-involvement when it comes to laterals.

A. If the conflict involves someone not getting the water they are entitled to, you should get involved as the acequia officers. There is no real basis in the law for a "non-involvement policy" for laterals when it comes to people being deprived of water.

If you think about it, **everyone who pays their acequia dues and has a valid water right has a right to get actual wet water delivered to their property.** It is the job of the acequia officers to make sure that happens and that everyone's rights are protected. If someone on a lateral is blocking or preventing another parciante from getting water, that parciante is entitled to get help from the mayordomo or commissioners the same as anyone else. Consider, if it was you who was being blocked by a neighbor on a lateral from getting any water, and you had paid your dues and done everything else that is expected of you as a parciante, wouldn't you expect to get the same assistance as everyone else from the acequia officers in enforcing your rights? After all, you have a valid water right, so no one has the right to prevent you from exercising it.

These ideas are in fact set out in the state acequia statutes. Section 73-2-64 prohibits anyone from blocking, interfering with or stealing water without permission from any acequia or dam, "or any contra or lateral acequia thereof." So laterals are specifically mentioned as having the same protections as the other sections of the acequia.

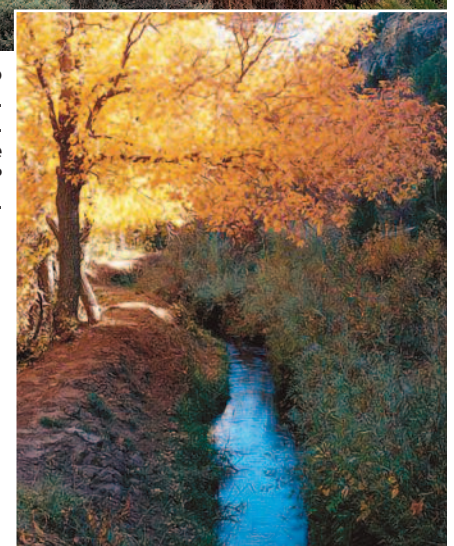
These same statutes authorize the mayordomo or commission (and in some cases the district attorney) to take one of several legal actions against the offending party, including civil and criminal prosecution. **So**, it is not correct to assume that it is up to the parciante to take legal action on their own. In fact, the authority for the officers to take action is much clearer in the law than it is for an individual parciante.

Of course, most acequias are able to figure out ways to resolve



Top: Sacando la acequia Finado Francisco Martinez in Taos, NM. Photo by Alex Romero.

Right: Acequia's are endangered but for how long? Photo by Glen Oakley.



the situation without going to court. However, the point here is that the acequia officers have the clear authority—and the duty—to step in and try to resolve the situation—informally at first, or through formal legal action if necessary. If the offending party is not responding to the complaints of their neighbor, involvement by the mayordomo or commission is sometimes realistically what it takes to resolve the situation so that the parciante gets the water.

It is a different matter if an acequia has a policy that the parcientes on a lateral are responsible for **cleaning** that lateral without help from the other parcientes. Some acequias have that type of policy and there is probably nothing legally wrong with that type of non-involvement. Some acequias have a policy of allowing the parcientes on a lateral to figure out among themselves a rotation **schedule** for the water. That type of non-involvement is probably fine, too—as long as everyone is getting the water. But when a parciante is blocked from getting water, the people who are in charge of the overall delivery system—that is, the mayordomo and commission—have a duty to get involved. 💧

Perseverance and Ingenuity: A tool that lightens the load of the Mayordomo



Acequia Madre de Alcalde Ingenuity: Lucia Sanchez, Commissioner of Acequia Madre de Alcalde, using the nut runner to open the headgate. Photo by Dick Williams.

by Toribio Garcia, NMAA Staff

Acequia de Alcalde is a large system running approximately seven miles long and averaging seven feet wide by seven feet deep. The system starts with the main diversion on the Rio Grande flowing south with four additional structures, each with two gates to control flow and pressure along the water route. The Mayordomo has to monitor and adjust these gates to maintain a good flow rate along the whole length of the canal daily.

This begins after the annual cleaning when the first water is released from the Rio Grande into the Acequia. All 8 gates have racks that are designed to stop large objects from entering the acequia; racks also cause debris to quickly clog up the Acequia. When debris collects onto any of the racks at any of the desagues structures, they have to be cleaned. Often times, this will require closing the main downstream flow gate and opening the desagues back towards the river. Historically the Mayordomo carried a hand crank and turned the two screw actuators by hand. Each of the two screw actuators requires about ten minutes time to lower or raise by hand, and when multiplied by four locations, can add up to a very long, physically challenging day.

Acequia de Alcalde had begun confronting this problem first by trying to build a tool with appropriate sockets on an impact wrench but quickly realized that the effect of this kind of tool might damage the actuators inside gearing. After trial and error and a lot of research the commission and Mayordomo finally discovered some companies who built a complete tool without impacting the screw mechanism. According to former commissioner Bob Garcia they do not need much torque, and would

like to turn the screws at about sixty to ninety revolutions per minute (rpm). Plarad bolting out of Germany builds a tool that was perfect for the job at hand. In November, Dick Williams of the Truvia group came to demonstrate one of their tools for the Commission.

The tool is a type of Nut runner originally designed for use in the oil and gas industry. It is slow moving tool used to seal screws to pipe fittings, very delicately with high torque and low speed.

The commission purchased a low cost Nut runner for the 2018 irrigation season. Bob Garcia believes many acequias have similar head gates systems and have the same problem. He also shared that this effort was a result of the Mayordomo falling ill, getting better and returning back to work and the need to make daily work easier with less effort. He believes it is a great investment for other acequias to consider purchasing as it is very beneficial to the mayordomo and in return to the parciantes.

Dick Williams can be reached at Truvia group 626-676-9232. Truvia group is a sub-company of Plarad Bolting out of Germany.

The NMAA salutes the work of acequias across the state who are constantly problem solving and adapting. This commission made an investment in time, research and finances to make the work of the Mayordomo safer, easier and more efficient.

Please share your stories of adaptation, technology and ingenuity with us at the NMAA so we can share them with acequias across the state. 💧



Adaption and efficiency in Alcalde, NM. Photo by Dick Williams.



Our acequia communities are precious because of the common themes and values that we share, but also because of the unique story that every acequia has. In this section we put a spotlight on different acequia communities to encourage our readers, parciantes, and acequeros to reflect on what makes their acequia special and to share their remarkable story.

Cordelia Coronado, Acequia Madre del Rio Chama

"THE ACEQUIA DOES NOT LET ME WANT FOR NOTHING! THE ACEQUIA FEEDS OUR FRIENDSHIPS, PEOPLE, ANIMALS AND CROPS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK HARD AT IT JUST MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE FOR THE LAND AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AND THE ACEQUIA WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE CARE OF US!"

—Cordelia Coronado, 84 years old, Parciante of Acequia del Rio Chama



Cordelia Coronado of Medanales, NM.
Photo by Teresa Maestas, daughter.

Interviewed and written by Olivia Romo, NMAA Staff

Cordelia Coronado was born on January 8th 1933 in the Chama Valley to Agueda Martinez and Eusebio Martinez. Eusebio was originally from Chimayo of the greater Ortega weaving family and Agueda learned her weaving skills from the Ortega's. Agueda supported her family by selling her woven goods and subsistence farming. Eusebio was a school teacher for many years until 1945 when he became the Post Master in Medanales, NM where he moved his family and they began their new life. Agueda taught all her daughters how to weave and became a nationally renowned weaver who was featured in National Geographic and Smithsonian Museum. Agueda has been acknowledged as the matriarch of the weaving community in Northern New Mexico as she continued this cultural tradition of weaving and passed it on to all of her daughters. Cordelia was one of ten children in the Martinez household who farmed all summer and wove all winter.

Cordelia is now 84 years old now and has eight children of her own who live within walking distance of her home and family farm. They continue to work together, weave, and carry on a long cultural tradition in the sacred Chama valley.

What is the history of your acequia community, as you know it (or as you've been told)?

La Acequia del Rio Chama was first used and dug between the years 1702-1714 according to archival and acequia records. When I was growing up in the valley I remember the large gathering of the neighbors and relatives to gather the harvest! Anywhere between 20 to 30 people would go from one house to the other to till and plant with horses, thresh wheat by hand, and husk corn. It was such a special time as a young girl and one of my favorite memories was harvesting corn in the fields. Our elders would hide a watermelon between the rows of corn and whoever got to the watermelon first got to keep it! Our people have always worked so closely together and helped one another but not so much these days. A few weeks ago we had our acequia meeting and nobody can afford to give up their time to be Mayordomo. You see, back then people were working for staples, not money. It worries me that I am the second oldest in the community and can barely find anyone to help me for pay. However, I am incredibly blessed to have children who come help me every weekend and as new people have come into the community there is interest to get involved with our acequia.

What kinds of crops does your acequia community grow?

We grow everything except head lettuce because of the heat. Corn, beans, squash, and melons do well in our valley. Last year I and three other farmers formed a food co-op with the help of the Center of Southwest Culture out of Albuquerque. The center helped us with seeds, soil testing, crop growth and marketing our produce. With their help we learned how to nurture our soil to keep it more productive, weigh and package our produce, and get assistance in taking it to the Ghost Ranch Conference Center for the farmers market. I have learned so much through this process and mostly the hard way but now I have very health soil and a strong crop every year! I have cultivated and protected a very special heirloom Chimayo chile seed that I got from my family. The seed grows best in the Chama Valley and I have people coming from all over the North to buy my crop!

What traditions and practices does your acequia community maintain? (Food and agriculture, limpia, etc.)

Next weekend we will clean the ditch and every parciante will send 1 worker per 10 acres. People come from the neighboring community to clean the acequia and we are hoping to have

water as soon as possible! When that water is flowing that is the greatest feeling in the world.

Our community has a yearly Dia de San Ysidro celebration in which we choose a different farmers field every year that we will gather at to pray and celebrate. San Antonio is our Patron Saint and in the good ol' days they blessed people fields after a procession of at least 4-5 miles long! At the end of the procession one farmer would open his farm and we would have a huge fiesta with a potluck and where the musicians from our church choir would sing and play music all day! We are all one human family and no matter where you come from if you are here we can all eat, plant, and celebrate together on this day and every day!

What is your irrigation season? (Time frame)

Acequia del Rio de Chama irrigation seasons starts now in the latter part of March and then we run all the way until the end of October. We close it up in the winters now because the Gophers make holes everywhere!

What are your commissioners and mayordomos doing this time of year?

We have very active commissioners who frequently apply for funding through our legislature, and persue grants for infrastructure repairs. Normally it is not a big load because we have a strong board and about 52 members. When I was younger, there was fewer people but with more acreage. We recently have had a big influx of new comers from California, Arizona etc., but it is important to remember that everyone is a part of this human family and their participation and influence is what will help the community and acequias to survive! I have had people from Peru and Ugondad join me at my table and people from all around the world. Did you know that we all have the same problems, wants, joys? We are all the same! It is our leaders that are turning everything upside down. People all over the world have grown the same foods but prepare it differently. They share the same values of the land or a late ancestor once did and we cannot forget that! So I share my food with them because if you don't have anyone to share the food you grow with it just doesn't taste good.

What makes your acequia special?

The acequia is the glue; it's what keeps a community together. Even if we don't see each other every day I know that my neighbors are here for me if I need them. It is the glue that keeps the people together because it feeds the friendships, people, animals and crops. You don't have to work hard at it, just be yourself and be available and the acequia will take care of us. I go to the store once a month if I am lucky just for coffee and sugar but my freezer keeps me going through the winter until I start filling it again in the summer. The acequias doesn't let me want for nothing, I go outside and farm and have all the means to cook. Because of the acequias I have lived a very rich life and am very blessed. I know where my food comes from and I am thankful and want to teach others about where it comes from, honor and give thanks to our water and mother earth and all she provides for us. 💧



Cordelia Coronado, President of the newly formed Medanales Farmers Food Coop. Photo by Center of Southwest Culture.

The Next Generation of Acequia Leaders and Farmers

Sembradores Team 2018

As acequias across the state are concerned with the aging population of parciantes and commissioners, the New Mexico Acequia Association has responded with a Farmer Training Program we call *Los Sembradores*. We know that it is vital to lift up and create opportunities and networks of support for the next generation of aspiring farmers. Our program blends traditional land-based practices, new technology, leadership development, core values and a community health perspective. We are excited to introduce you to our 2018 Sembradores, all of whom are already leaders in their own right. We hope you will be inspired by their passion and dedication.

NMAA is honored to have 2 incredible Farmer Trainers / Mentors, each of whom brings an incredible wealth of knowledge and wisdom:

Edward Gonzales



I'm a long life resident of the valle de Chamisal y Ojito, and I've been farming & caring for the land my entire life. I am a farmer mentor along with my daughter Donne, and am happy to be given the opportunity to share my land based knowledge with anyone who wants to learn.

Acequias are important to me because we need to keep our heritage & water rights thriving.

Donne Gonzales



My name is Donne, I'm 23 years old and in my lifetime I have developed a great respect and love for gardening and our traditional practices.

I was blessed to be given the opportunity of being a NMAA Sembrando Semillas participant for over 10 years. When I was 19, I was accepted as an AFSC Farmer Trainee. During the second year, I was able to become a trainer and came to realize that being one with the mother earth was what gave me the most peace.

The Farmer Trainer program was transitioned from AFSC to NMAA, and I was given the opportunity to lead a group in Chamisal. This is our second year here, and this year's group has 5 farmer trainees. I strongly believe in sharing gardening skills, traditions and sharing my querencia for our land and acequias to individuals of all ages. I want my daughter, my family, and my community to have a healthy and traditional food source. We are truly blessed to have sacred land, water, and native seeds.

Linden Schneider, Las Vegas, NM



Having a background in botany, soil and water science, I joined the program to expand my knowledge of local farming and connect with farming communities in New Mexico. I hope to learn skills, techniques, and traditions that can help me engage the

communities in and around Las Vegas in farming for local food production and to increase food security.

I see acequias, and their contribution to the local hydrology, becoming even more essential to maintaining the many different types of water systems we rely on, like wells, riparian areas, and shallow subsurface water throughout New Mexico, in the face of altered climate regimes. By teaching and learning in Las Vegas communities and surrounding areas about the scientific, cultural, ecological, and agricultural importance

of acequias, I hope to preserve and promote their continued use.



Emily Arasim, Tesuque, NM

I am a 24 year old farmer and seed saver, born and raised on the Acequia Madre de Tesuque. I am honored to have this opportunity to work with so many incredible community members who can help me learn and grow the skills, strength of spirit, and understanding needed to be a good steward of our regions seeds and farming lifeways.

Farming and our relationship with local waters and lands is the source of health, livelihoods, culture and identity, and survival for generations to come. Here in New Mexico we have maintained beautiful practices of care, and still have the huge opportunity and responsibility to protect these gifts, which have been lost across much of the rest of the world.

I dream of the day when all of the fields long left fallow are once again sprouting with local, traditional maíz, chiles, beans and medicines. I dream of the day when our elders feel the weight lifted off of their shoulders, because they know that the next generations of hands and hearts are ready to carry forward their work and love of the land.



Augustine Gonzales, Chamisal, NM

I am 19 years old, and part of the Los Sembradores program because I want to keep the family traditions going. This year, I will work hard to grow and care for a family garden.

I grew up between the Acequia del Monte and Acequia del Medio. My vision is to keep Acequia traditions going so we can water our crops, eat good food and have a healthy life. I am here to do my part in making that happen.



Jordan Lucero, Chimayo NM

Hello, my name is Jordan Lucero. I joined Los Sembradores so I can bring back the beauty and importance of gardening, not only into northern New Mexico's heart and eyes, but the world's! I want to build the community back together through the children and those struggling with addiction.

Acequias and farming are important to me because acequias keep our water flowing to our farm. It keeps us going to produce good food for our communities and family. My vision for acequias is to keep them clean, protected and free flowing for our future farmers! I'm contributing to that by cleaning the acequias and working hard to fight for our rights to keep acequias alive!! *El Agua Es La Vida!*



Raul Rodriguez, Chamisal y Santa Fe, NM

I've always been an old soul, I was brought up by the belt, Bible, and hard work. My dad raised me in the generation of men where your word and your handshake mean something. I joined the program to work with the tierra de Dios. Too many people are busy with the hustle and bustle of life, that they don't see or hear or feel the little things, like the way the land smells or the way the sunlight feels on your face or the way the sun wakes up over the mountains. Acequias and farming are important to me because it's a way of life, and one of the most essential things in life is to grow, and to learn.



Essence Quintana, Llano NM

I am 18 years old, and a resident of Llano, NM. I recently inherited 4 irrigated acres of land that has belonged to my family for many generations. I joined Los Sembradores because I wanted to learn how to keep a vegetable garden like my grandparents did when I was a child. During a recent trip to buy groceries, I realized that many of the vegetables that I'm buying can be grown here at home, and it's better to know where your food is coming from. My property is irrigated from the Acequia Madre, and this year I will participate on the Acequia Madre annual cleaning as a parciante. My goal is that we keep the Acequia community going so that we will always have water for healthy crops.

The Next Generation of Acequia Leaders and Farmers

Acequia Day at the Legislature 2018

Acequia farmers and advocates marching with banner "Nuestra Agua, Nuestro Futuro" featuring painting by local artist Cordelio Trujillo of Chimayo, NM.



On Thursday, January 25th 2018, three hundred farmers, ranchers and advocates marched to the state capitol to celebrate the economic and cultural contributions of acequias. The rally in the rotunda was filled with partners, collaborators and other environmental organizations who gathered in solidarity for acequias! Muchisimas gracias to all the farmers and acequia leaders who traveled near and far to participate with us on this special day, we hope you can join us next year!

NMAA also wants to thank in a special way Evalina Montoya who donated her art for our 2018 Acequia Day Buttons and Cordelio Trujillo for his contribution of his art for our banners and flyers!

Acequias continue to demonstrate resilience in the face of these changing times! Please consider joining the NMAA in the movement around the principle that Water is Life, El Agua es Vida, and that we are defenders of the precious waters that nurture our communities.

NMAA is a membership based organization that depends on your support to continue our vital work! Join today or send a donation if you are already a member. Thank you!! 💧

Que Vivan las Acequias!



Above: Paula Garcia, Executive Director of NMAA leading the Acequia Day Rally. Photo by Eddie Moore, Albuquerque Journal.



Left: Michael Diaz & Santiago Maestas marching to the Roundhouse proudly wearing Acequia Day pins featuring local artist Evalina Montoya. Photo by Eddie Moore, Albuquerque Journal.



Below: Don Bustos moves farmers to be more aggressive in protecting their water rights at Acequia Day Rally. Photo by Eddie Moore, Albuquerque Journal.

Acequias Defend Use of Spanish Language



Acequia Landscape in Los Brazos, NM. Photo by Quita Ortiz.

Parkview Community Ditch is in Tierra Amarilla, a village in rural Northern New Mexico, known for its enduring fight to protect its natural resources for the community, including those within the historic Tierra Amarilla Land Grant. A district court ruling affirmed the cultural practice of conducting meetings in Spanish, but that decision was appealed. Now, the NMAA has joined Parkview in its fight at the Court of Appeals to defend their right to hold meetings in Spanish. The brief recounts New Mexico's complex history of protections in the New Mexico Constitution for Spanish-speaking inhabitants.

The NMAA's legal team that prepared the amicus brief includes longstanding partner New Mexico Legal Aid, represented by David Benavides, Esq. "After centuries of acequia meetings being conducted in the language of the local community, we were alarmed that someone would sue an acequia on these grounds," said Benavides. "If any entity should reflect the community, the culture, and its people, it should be the local acequia."

To read the rest of this article please go to: <https://lasacequias.org/2018/02/14/acequias-defend-use-spanish-language/> 💧

Repartimiento, Drought, and Climate Change

by Sylvia Rodriguez

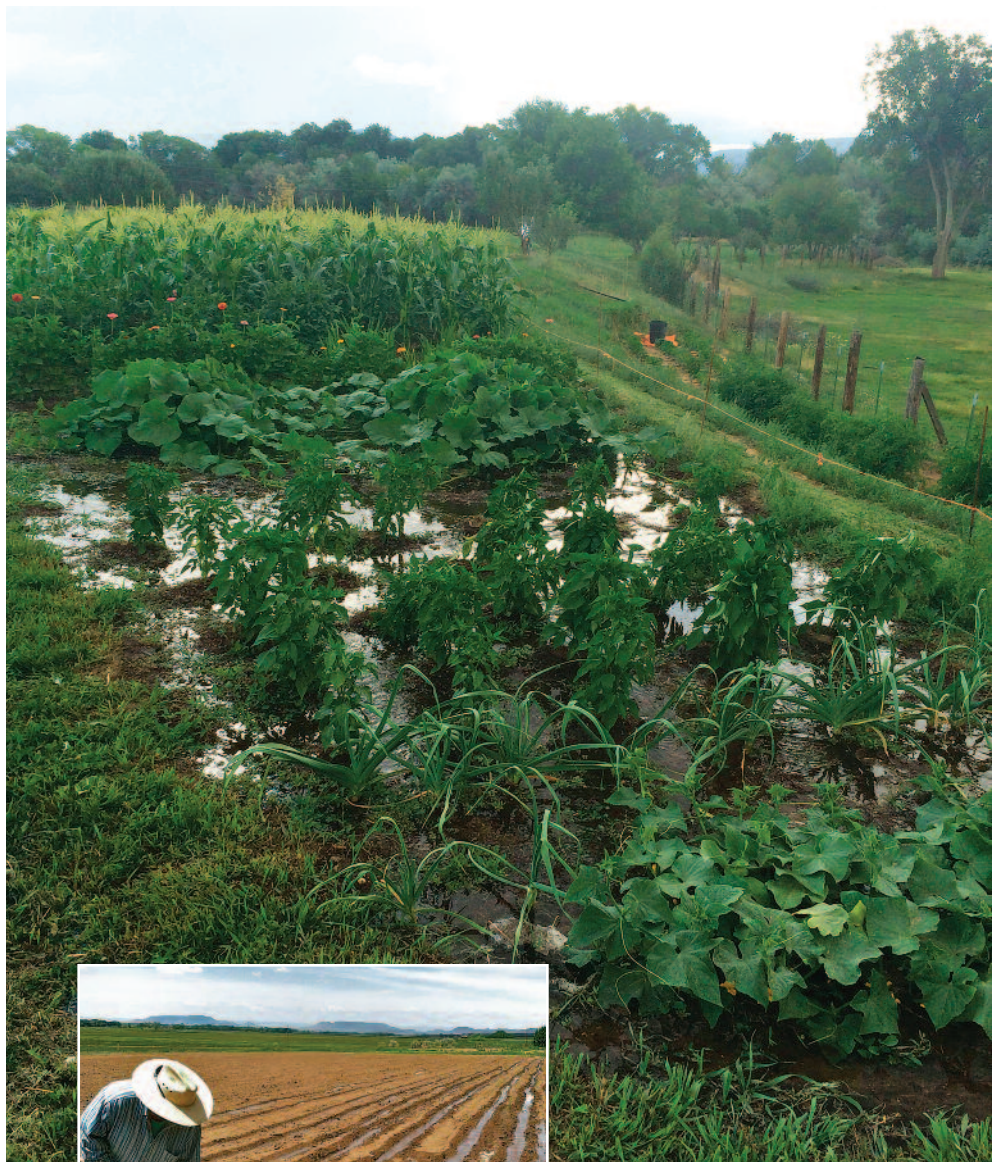
Faced with too little water to irrigate as usual this spring, many acequia officers are currently holding stream wide meetings to talk about how to share and manage the shortages. This is done according to local custom. Traditional acequia governance is geared to accommodate conditions ranging from the abundance of water to extreme scarcity. Within a single acequia system or association, the Mayor-domo allocates water to parcientes in good standing according to principles of equity, proportion, and need. Within a stream system, the river is shared among upstream and downstream acequias according to principles of need and equity as well as a customary proportional or rotational procedure for dividing the water (*repartimiento*). Such customary agreements have been worked out over generations of recurrent negotiation between neighbors under fluctuating “normal,” plentiful, and adverse conditions. Each is tailored to its own particular history and place. Some ultimately achieve the status of legal decrees while others may remain unwritten but are nonetheless clearly understood by all who inherit and observe them.

For example, in times of abundant or average flow, some acequias adhere to a proportional division of a stream. But when the flow is low, upstream acequias may agree to close their headgates for a designated period of time so that the water can reach those lower on the stream. Parcientes may petition their mayor-domo for an *auxilio* or special dispensation of water for a few hours to water livestock or a small kitchen garden that puts food on their table. There are times, however, when there is too little water in a stream to even reach the headgate. This can happen late in a normal irrigation season, or early on in a drought year such as 1996 or 2018. Preparing for the worst, yet ever hopeful for better times to come, acequia farmer-ranchers may decide to buy less seed, plant less acreage, and sell or butcher livestock during an especially difficult year. Unable to irrigate, resourceful parcientes will instead focus their energies on repairs to headgates, ditches, and desagües, and on clearing property of brush that can fuel wildfire. They can revise or fine-tune their Bylaws to include protective provisions for water banking and that empower commissions to evaluate proposed water right transfers.

Drought tests the integrity and resilience of an acequia community. Acequia farming, management, and governance depend on a combination of subsistence practices as well as principles, values, and attitudes that some scholars call a moral economy. The core principles of the acequia moral economy include reciprocity, mutualism, *confianza* (trust), and *respeto* (respect). How well an acequia fares in times of drought depends also on the character, dedication, and personal example of individual officers and parcientes.

Acequias have proven a resilient and sustainable system for managing water as a commons during four centuries of adaptation to New Mexico’s unforgiving, semi-arid environment. But today, in addition to the impacts of economic, social, and political forces that escalated during the twentieth century, these small-scale farmer-managed irrigation systems are challenged also by climate change. Scientists and our own perceptions confirm that climate change is upon us. Climatologists’ broad consensus holds that the US Southwest is undergoing not just periodic drought punctuated by unpredictable patterns of precipitation, but an overall process of *aridification*. No one knows for sure what the future will hold, either for traditional land-based agrarian or concentrated urban populations.

The time has come when we must ask ourselves what practices, values, habits, and policies are more likely to sustain future generations under conditions of increasing pressure on limited resources, especially water. Will public policy favor the privileging



Above: Regando el jardín con la acequia del marrano en Taos. Photo by Jacinta Chavez. Left: Joseph C Gallegos Irrigating his fields in Costilla, NM. Photographer unknown.

of individual advantage over public welfare, harnessing itself to a state-sanctioned engine of continuous growth for private economic profit? Will a top-down, zero-sum game of prior rights to a monetized vital resource totally supplant a moral economy of shared shortages, reciprocity, mutual commitment, and living within our means? Or will the time-tested lessons and deeper wisdom of acequia governance help to illuminate a viable path through the coming uncertain decades?

*Sylvia is professor emerita of anthropology and former director of the Ortiz Center for Intercultural Studies at the University of New Mexico. Her research and publications have focused on interethnic relations in the Upper Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico and the cultural impact of tourism, identity, and the conflict over land and water. She sits on the board of the Taos Valley Acequia Association and is a commissioner on Acequia de San Antonio de Valdez while conducting research on acequia matters and the politics and anthropology of water. Her publications include prize-winning book *Acequia: Water Sharing, Sanctity, and Place*. ♦*

Join NMAA!



Memberships	Donor Levels
Parciente Member \$25/year	Padrino/Madrina de las Acequias \$500 and above
Acequia Member \$50/year	Hermano/Hermana de las Acequias \$250 - \$500
Regional Association Member \$75/year	Amigo/Amiga de las Acequias \$25 - \$250

<https://lasacequias.org/product/donate/> -or-
 call Lori at (505) 995-9644 to donate or become an NMAA member.

Through the Drought We Will Survive: A Few Thoughts On How

by Serafina Lombardi, NMAA Staff

The drought we are facing is real – while I continue to hope for precipitation there is no avoiding what is. We can look to history that analyzes drought in terms of tree ring growth and people’s teeth. It was not long ago that a small harvest meant eminent hunger for a community. While we may have alternative means of feeding ourselves, the economic impacts of drought for those who live off the land can be quite profound. Without plentiful hay harvests, the price of *pastura* skyrockets, and many folks are forced to sell off large amounts of their livestock holdings. Farmers under the MRGCD are looking at the possibility of being cut off from water in late June, a very short season especially for those market farmers who depend on the water to make a living. And yet drought after drought the people of this land have persisted. Drought means hardship, and the best way to address hardship is to see it as an opportunity, a chance to be creative, and a reminder of how precious our world is.

Historically, acequias have prioritized kitchen gardens in times of drought – because this was the most nutritious food that was needed to survive. As witnessed in the Article “*Repartimiento, Drought and Climate Change*” acequia values are sharing and drought tests our abilities to do this. But it also calls on us to be our best, kindest self, most called to generosity. During these times of shortage, folks have historically left many acres uncultivated, knowing there would not be enough water to go around to all parcels. None-the-less I have heard it over and over again, “*siempre sembramos, con fe*” (with faith, we always plant). Earlier this winter I commented anxiously to my 91 year old neighbor “it is so dry . . . what will the year hold, what will we do?” With great calm and patient words he told me, “Sometimes there is water, sometimes not much, but always a little . . .” and something to the effect that “it will be ok, you’ll see.”

Now is a time to be grateful for our locally adapted seeds handed down through generations with the memory of surviving drought (See Ideas for Growing, Saving & Sharing Local Seeds This Year). Now is a time to question what crops can survive on little water and make our selections carefully. Miguel Santistevan is ever promoting the garbanzo as extremely drought tolerant. You can begin by asking the elders in the community, what did they do to survive



Above: Desiree Gonzales overlooks and irrigates a garden. Photo by Miguel Santistevan. Right: Donne Gonzales Regando Ajo on Sostenga, Northern NM Community College Farm. Photo by Norberto Armijo.



in dry years? For many farmers drought is a motivator to experiment, particularly with irrigation methods such a drip tape, cisterns, piping laterals. Ask farmers in your area or look online about how that might work on your field and visit your local NRCS office to see on what farm improvements they can help you with. Those with wells will make careful decisions about how much to pump in times of less recharge. For smaller gardens, using shade cloths to reduce the intensity of the sun as well as plantings that will shade other crops is a strategy. Mulching around plantings to help retain moisture in the soil is an old trick, and almost anything can work; cardboard, grass clippings, woodchips, pumice etc. The golden rule of drought resilience is healthy soils rich in organic matter that dramatically retain more moisture. One resource is:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/soils/health/>

The long view has us eager to care for our watersheds and considering how to be careful with our aquifers. There are myriad ways to adapt and survive a drought all which will be unique to your goals and land. We encourage you to share with us your stories and the strategies that work for you so we can share them with the statewide acequia community.

While severe drought may be intermittent, we know we have been entering hotter drier times challenging the plants and animals we care for. Let us be aware of how we live on this earth and attempt to tread as lightly as we can for the sake of future generations.

One final thought, whatever your faith, pray for rain!

Please share your drought practices with us at: serafina@lasacequias.org 💧

NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA ASSOCIATION: MISSION & VISION



The New Mexico Acequia Association is a statewide, non-profit organization founded in 1990.

MISSION

Our mission is to protect water and our acequias, grow healthy food for our families and communities, and to honor our cultural heritage.

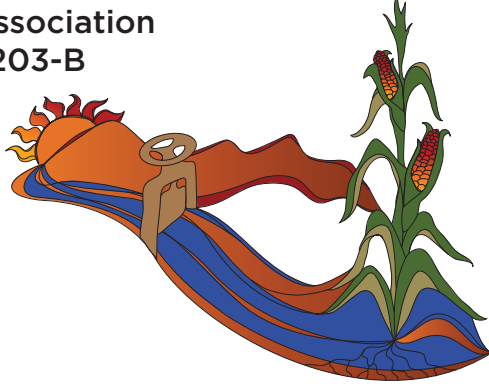
VISION STATEMENT

In our vision, acequias flow with clean water, people work together to grow food, and communities celebrate cultural and spiritual traditions. People honor acequias as part of our heritage and express *querencia* through a strong connection to land and community. Knowledge and experience about growing food, sharing water, and saving seed are passed on from generation to generation.

Guided by our core values, the New Mexico Acequia Association grows a movement of people of all ages and walks of life to defend and protect our precious water by resisting its commodification and contamination. Through involvement in NMAA, families and youth are inspired to cultivate the land, care for our acequias, and heal past injustices. Communities have an abundance of healthy, locally-grown food because we recognize agriculture as a respected and dignified livelihood and way of life.

Noticias de las Acequias • Spring 2018

New Mexico Acequia Association
805 Early Street Suite 203-B
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 995-9644
www.lasacequias.org



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Spring Events:

The NM Food & Seed Sovereignty Alliance Presents:

13th Annual Ówîngeh Táh Pueblos y Semillas Gathering and Seed Exchange



Hosted by
NM Food & Seed Sovereignty Alliance:
(NMI Acequia Association,
Honor Our Pueblo Existence,
Traditional Native American Farmer's
Association,
Tewa Women United,
Agricultural Implementation Research
& Education, and
Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute)

These hands, earth, and seeds will bring life. Photo by Emily Arasim.



Seed balls ready to be shared after prayer. Photo by Seth Roffman.

“Honoring Our Ancestors”

Bring your native, heirloom and organic seeds
to share and for the ceremony!

~~~~~  
**Saturday, April 21, 2018**

**9:00am to 4:00pm**

Los Luceros Historic Ranch  
Alcalde, NM

County Rd. 48 off of Route 68  
~~~~~

***Please consider a sponsorship
of this beautiful and unique event!**

Contact Juliet Garcia-Gonzales
at the NM Acequia Association to register
or make a sponsorship (505) 995-9644
or Juliet@lasacequias.org
www.lasacequias.org



SEBRADORES WORKSHOP: SOIL HEALTH

APRIL 11, 9AM-12PM

Chamisal - Please RSVP to Serafina@lasacequias.org or
505-995-9644 for directions and more info

WOOL FESTIVAL AND SHEEP SHEARING

APRIL 15, 9AM-3:30PM

Los Luceros Historic Ranch, Alcalde
Family friendly event. Shearing, spinning, historic tours and more.
Suggested donation \$5 per car. Hosted by EVFAC contact:
development@evfac.org

NMAA ACEQUIA PATHWAYS TO FUNDING: FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE WORKSHOPS

APRIL 19, 9AM-12PM -

Nambe Community Center, 180 A SR 503

APRIL 26, 10AM-1PM - T or C - Albert J. Lyon Event Center,
2953 South Broadway

MAY 10, 9AM-12PM - Pecos Municipal Building

Every Acequia is required to be in Financial Compliance with the State
-please send a commissioner. Call NMAA for more info 505-995-9644

NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA COMMISSION MEETINGS USUALLY EVERY 3RD FRIDAY OF THE MONTH, 10AM

Location varies

For details contact Chairman Ralph Vigil 505 603-2879,
molinodelaisla@gmail.com

SEED EXCHANGE

APRIL 21, 9AM-4PM

Los Luceros Historic Ranch, Alcalde

RSVP to Juliet@lasacequias.org or at 505-995-9644 to sponsor or for
more information

DIA DE SAN ISIDRO • MAY 15

Across NM. Look for announcements in the NMAA eblast and in your
local community for events

AGRIFUTURES CONFERENCE • MAY 16-17

Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown, 2600 Louisiana Boulevard NE ABQ

Calling all farmers under 40!

<http://www.nmffa.org/> See AgriFutures Registration

NMAA STATEWIDE COMMISSIONER MAYORDOMO CONFERENCE

JUNE 21, 9AM-4PM

Los Luceros Historic Ranch, Alcalde

Contact NMAA to RSVP and for more info

SAVE THE DATE! CONGRESO DE LAS ACEQUIAS

NOVEMBER 17, 9AM-3PM

Marriot Pyramid, 5151 San Francisco Rd NE, Albuquerque

Welcoming Sponsorships! Contact Lori@lasacequias.org

505-995-9644

REGISTER WITH THE FARM SERVICE AGENCY

ONGOING Visit your local FSA Office

Become eligible for USDA programs & get counted in Ag Census

SIGN UP FOR NATURAL CONSERVATION RESOURCE SERVICE ON FARM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMS

ONGOING Visit the NMAA office

Call Serafina at NMAA 505-995-9644 for assistance